

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for downloading a file from a computer, the system comprising:

5 means for retrieving a plurality of portions of a file from a plurality of computers, wherein at least a first of said portions is retrieved from a first one of said computers and at least a second of said portions is retrieved from a second one of said computers; and

means for assembling said file from said plurality of
10 portions.

2. A system according to claim 1 and further comprising:

means for determining the presence of said file on each of
said computers.

3. A system according to claim 2 wherein said means for determining is
operative to:

determine the presence of said file on a primary computer;
and

20 determine whether said file on each of said plurality of computers is a duplicate of said file on said primary computer.

4. A system according to claim 2 wherein said means for determining is
operative to determine that said files on each of said computers have at

least one file characteristic in common.

5. A system according to claim 1 and further comprising:

means for receiving a list of the addresses of said computers
5 from a query-capable computer.

6. A system according to claim 1 and further comprising:

means for determining the performance of said
computers;

10 means for ranking said computers from best
performing to worst performing,

and wherein said means for retrieving is operative to
retrieve from a selected plurality of said computers selected in order of their
ranking from best performing to worst performing.

7. A system according to claim 6 wherein said means for determining is
operative to determine the response time of said computers.

8. A system according to claim 6 wherein said means for determining is
20 operative to determine the throughput of said computers.

9. A system according to claim 1 wherein said means for retrieving is
operative to:

discontinue retrieving any of said portions from any of said

computers that provides its portion at a performance level that falls below a predefined performance level; and

continue retrieval of said retrieval-discontinued portion from any other of said computers.

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10. A system according to claim 1 wherein said means for retrieving is operative to:

discontinue retrieving any of said portions from any of said computers that provides its portion at a performance level that falls below a predefined performance level; and

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continue retrieval of said retrieval-discontinued portion from a computer other than any of said computers.

11. A system according to claim 1 wherein said means for retrieving is operative to retrieve using File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

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12. A system according to claim 1 wherein said means for retrieving is operative to retrieve using Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP).

13. A method for downloading a file from a computer, the method comprising:

retrieving a plurality of portions of said file from a plurality of computers, wherein at least a first of said portions is retrieved from a first of any of said computers and at least a second of said portions

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is retrieved from a second of any of said computers; and

assembling said file from said plurality of portions.

14. A method according to claim 13 and further comprising:

5 determining the presence of said file on each of said plurality of said computers.

15. A method according to claim 14 wherein determining the presence of said file comprises:

10 determining the presence of said file on a primary computer, and

 determining whether said file on each of said plurality of computers is a duplicate of said file on said primary computer.

15 16. A method according to claim 14 wherein said determining the presence of said file comprises determining that said files on each of said plurality of said computers have at least one file characteristic in common.

20 17. A method according to claim 13 and further comprising receiving a list of the addresses of said computers from a query-capable computer.

18. A method according to claim 13 and further comprising:

 determining the performance of said computers;

 ranking said computers from best performing to worst

performing,

and wherein retrieving said plurality of portions comprises retrieving from a selected plurality of said computers selected in order of their ranking from best performing to worst performing.

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19. A method according to claim 18 wherein determining the performance of said computers comprises determining the response time of said computers.

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20. A method according to claim 18 wherein determining the performance of said computers comprises determining the throughput of said computers.

21. A method according to claim 13 wherein retrieving said plurality of portions comprises:

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discontinuing retrieving any of said portions from any of said computers that provides its portion at a performance level that falls below a predefined performance level; and

continuing retrieval of said retrieval-discontinued portion from any other of said computers.

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22. A method according to claim 13 wherein retrieving said plurality of portions comprises:

discontinuing retrieving any of said portions from any of said computers that provides its portion at a performance level that falls

below a predefined performance level; and

continuing retrieval of said retrieval-discontinued portion from a computer other than any of said computers.

5 23. A method according to claim 13 wherein retrieving said plurality of portions comprises retrieving using File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

24. A method according to claim 13 wherein retrieving said plurality of portions comprises retrieving using Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP).

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25. A computer program embodied on a computer-readable medium for downloading a file from a computer and comprising:

a file retrieval code segment operative to retrieve a plurality of portions of said file from a plurality of computers, wherein said file retrieval code segment is operative to retrieve at least a first of said portions from a first of any of said computers and at least a second of said portions from a second of any of said computers; and

a file assembly code segment operative to assemble said file from said plurality of portions.

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